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**National Safety Council offers 5 tips for using opioid painkillers safely**

*During [National Safety Month](#), NSC urges Americans to take precautions when taking prescription painkillers*

Itasca, IL – [Drug overdoses](#) are now the leading cause of unintentional injury-related death for Americans ages 25 to 64. Opioid prescription painkillers – legally obtainable drugs that are sitting in many medicine cabinets – account for most of these fatal drug overdoses.

During National Safety Month, the [National Safety Council](#) urges Americans to take precautions when taking prescription painkillers. Follow these five tips from Dr. Don Teater, NSC medical advisor, to help reduce the risk of developing an addiction to, or overdosing from, prescription painkillers:

1. **Talk with your doctor about whether an opioid painkiller is right for you.** In most cases, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAID), such as ibuprofen or naproxen, are better choices for your pain. Taking NSAIDs with acetaminophen makes them work even better. For most people, they will provide equal or greater pain relief than opioid painkillers with fewer side-effects.
2. **Take prescription opioid painkillers for the shortest period of time as possible.** If your doctor feels that you would benefit from prescription opioid painkillers in addition to a NSAID, ask for a two- to three-day prescription instead of a seven- to 10-day one.
3. **Pay attention to your body's reaction to prescription painkillers.** You may be taking the right dose for the correct length of time, but you still may be too impaired to drive, operate certain kinds of machinery or make important decisions.
4. **Never share your medications.** Three out of four people who misuse prescription painkillers get the drugs from friends or family members. It is illegal and unsafe to share your medicine. Also, make sure your medications are properly stored in a locked box at home so they cannot be stolen or taken inadvertently.
5. **Never mix prescription painkillers with alcohol or certain medications.** Both alcohol and painkillers are sedatives and can intensify the effects of one another. Other medications can interfere with painkillers, too. Tell your doctor or pharmacist about all medications you are on before taking prescription painkillers.

“Prescription painkiller misuse is a growing epidemic. However, most people who abuse these drugs are struggling with an addiction they never intended to have,” said John Ulczycki, vice president of strategic initiatives at NSC. “This National Safety Month, we hope to educate Americans on proper use so they can relieve pain without the tragic consequences of drug dependence or death.”

National Safety Month encourages safe behaviors to prevent the leading causes of unintentional injuries and deaths. The Council's National Safety Month campaign includes free downloadable materials on preventing prescription drug abuse. Visit [nsc.org/nsm](http://nsc.org/nsm) to get involved.

**About the National Safety Council**

Founded in 1913 and chartered by Congress, the National Safety Council, [nsc.org](http://nsc.org), is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to save lives by preventing injuries and deaths at work, in homes and communities, and on the road through leadership, research, education and advocacy. NSC advances this mission by partnering with businesses, government agencies, elected officials and the public in areas where we can make the most impact – distracted driving, teen driving, workplace safety, prescription drug overdoses and Safe Communities.